DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 260 614 HE 018 565

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TITLE Advising the Advisors: A Preventive Intervention Strategy.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the National Conference of the American College Personnel Association (Boston, MA, 1985).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Advising; Career Choice; *Career Counseling; College Faculty; Decision Making; *Faculty Advisers; Higher Education; Inservice Education; Interprofessional Relationship; *Interviews; Majors (Students); Professional Development; *Referral; Skill Development; Staff Role; State Universities; Student Personnel Services; *Student Personnel Workers; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Virginia Polytechnic Inst and State Univ

ABSTRACT

Workshops for academic advisers that were held by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University are described to assist staff in career planning, counseling, and student services. Developed by the University Counseling Services, the workshops series for faculty and invited academic advisers, was designed to: promote collaboration between student services staff and faculty, reduce the frustration and burnout reported by advisers in addressing student concerns for which they feel unprepared, increase the ease of referral by advisers to appropriate student service professionals, and reduce incidents of poor advising. Outlines are provided for two workshops: (1) advising, interviewing, and referral; and (2) choosing majors and careers. Additional contents are: 14 terms that clarify the nature of the adviser's role (e.g., information provider, confidant, sounding board); 6 questions that can help staff explore reasons for wanting to be an adviser; 17 topics that advisers identified for future workshops or support group meetings; and topics of 11 other training programs available to advisers. (SW)

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Advising the Advisors: A Preventive Intervention Strategy

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Presented at the National
Conference of the American
College Personnel Association
Boston, Mass., 1985

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ABSTRACT

Advising the Advisors: A Preventive Intervention Strategy

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In response to recent trends in University Counseling Services toward preventive programming, collaboration between student services staff and faculty, and recognition of the importance to students of academic advising, a dual workshop series entitled, "Advising, Interviewing and Referral Skills" and "How, Why, and When Students Choose Careers" was developed and presented to invited academic advisors. This presentation for interested university counseling, career counseling, and other student affairs professionals, describes the rationale and contents of the workshops, a variety of additional strategies for "Advising the Advisors," and avenues in which academic advisors in turn provide advisement for student services professionals.

Advising the Advisors: A Preventive Intervention Strategy

Student service professionals have long been the wearers of many hats, and nowhere is this diversity more evident than in the recent progression of the university counseling center's emphasis from individualized remediational intervention to proactive, preventive programming (Drum, 1984). This trend, coupled with the call for collaboration between academicians and student services staff (Canon, 1984) and the increased recognition since the 1970's of the importance for students of the academic advising process (Habley, 1983), has provided the foundation for the developement of a variety of intervention strategies by counseling service providers. One especially effective preventive intervention strategy spawned from these trends and directed at the amelioration of students' educational, vocational, and personal concerns is that of "Advising the Advisors."

The rationale for developing such a formalized informational and consultative liaison between the university counseling service and the faculty and staff who serve as academic advisors is evident. Most notably, a recent needs assessment survey summarizing responses of 218 student services personnel from 74 Texas institutions revealed the following specific and predominant needs of personnel: "development of student services programs that relate to the academic community," "development of well-integrated advisement programs that involve all academic and vocational areas," and "improvement of the communication and relationships between student services staff and administration" (Dameron et al, 1982). Furthermore, it is evident that academic advisors perceive themselves as providing assistance to students in areas for which they may not have been appropriately prepared, including academic guidance, career planning, and decision-making; "special" academic, social or financial concerns; and emotional or psychological

problems (Biggs et al, 1985; Peabody et al, 1983; Walsh, 1979). The development of programs to assist advisors has been complicated by the diversity of advising structures in various institutions including such varieties as self-advisement, faculty advisement, peer advisement, computer-assisted advisement, advising centers, and the hiring of professional academic advisors (Habley, 1983).

In response to this zietgiest and acknowledging the challenges involved, the Career Planning Committee of the University Counseling Services at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University developed and offered a dual workshop series for faculty and invited staff academic advisors with the expressed purpose of "Advising the Advisors" about (1): "Advising, Interviewing and Referral Skills" and (2): "How, When and Why Students Choose Careers" (career development theory and assistance). Through this effort, we hoped to unify or prevent the splintering of the academic advising personnel, reduce the frustration and burn-out reported by advisors in confronting student concerns for which they felt unprepared, increase the ease of referral by advisors to appropriate student service professionals and reduce incidents of poor advising thus increasing the likelihood of student retention.

It is the purpose of this presentation to describe further for interested counseling service, career planning, and other student services professionals (1) the rationale for, content, and evaluation of these workshops, providing outlines for the easy reconstruction of them, (2) a variety of additional avenues in which we "advise" the advisors, (3) the complementary opportunities in which the advisors provide useful advisement for us as student services professionals which can then be useful in our advisement and counseling of students, and (4) future directions for preventive intervention strategies through advising the advisors.

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Biggs, D. A., Brodie, J. D., and Barnhart, W. J. The dynamics of undergraduate advising. Research in Higher Education, 1975, 3, 345.

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Appendix A

ADVISING, INTERVIEWING AND REFERRAL: A FACULTY/STAFF WORKSHOP

Outline

1. Introduction of Leaders and Participants

   Leaders describe style of the workshop, i.e., everyone contributes to the group through sharing of experiences, interaction in exercises, and through informal spontaneous questions and suggestions.

2. Defining the Advisor's Role (let participants do it, see appendix C)

   a. Generate list of definitions from members, write them on board.

   b. Summarize, condense, or augment list.

   c. Rank order roles by participants' vote.

3. Needs and Expectations in Advising

   a. Advisor's Needs (use discussion questions, see appendix D)

      1) What are they?

      2) How do advisors seek to meet them in the advising interview?

   b. Student's needs

      1) What are they?

      2) How do students seek to meet them in the advising interview?

   c. When do the needs of advisors and students clash? How can conflicts be reduced?

4. The Advising Interview: Communications Skills and Approaches to Advising

   a. Attending Behaviors

      1) Good Attending:
         Physically relaxed, good eye contact, avoid distractions, stay on topic.

      2) Intrusive Attending:
         Crowding personal space, forced eye contact, prying questions.

      3) Uncaring, Distracted Attending:
         Too comfortable, distracted by surroundings, poor eye contact, little effort to follow advisee's conversation.

   b. Response Styles

      1) Reflection of feeling

2) Reflection of content
3) Denial of feeling
4) Advice giving

c. Interviewing Models
1) Information centered
2) Feeling centered
3) Combination information/feeling

5. Referrals
a. When to
b. How to
c. Problem referrals

CHOOSING MAJORS AND CAREERS: A FACULTY/STAFF WORKSHOP

Outline

I. Purpose:

A. To improve academic and career advising resources by exposing faculty and staff to relevant career development theory: How, When and Why People Make Career Choices

B. To acquaint participants with resources available to students for effective career choice

C. To examine how advisors can help in this process

II. Participants:

A. Academic career advisors on campus

B. Select invited student personnel and services staff

III. Process

A. Introduction

1. What to expect in the workshop?
   a. Career development theory
   b. Resources for career choice assistance
   c. Opportunity for self-appraisal

2. Ask participants...(record on blackboard)
   Reflecting upon your own professional experience....
   a. How did you choose your career?
   b. How did you select your undergraduate major? Graduate specialization?
   c. How has your career developed since that time? Changes? Job selections?

B. Career development theory overview: Four distinct perspectives (Osipow, 1983): Use participants previous responses to illustrate

1. Trait-Factor Theories: Matching men and jobs

2. Sociological model: "Reality or Accident Theory"

3. Developmental or Self-Concept Theory
   a. Ginzberg et al
   b. Super

4. Vocational choice as an extension of personality
   a. Roe
   b. Holland

5. Discussion of vocational choice theory underlying your counseling center staff's career counseling and programming. (For example, at UCS we combine Trait-Factor with vocational testing, Super and Holland)

C. Enumerating resources for Career choice assistance which advisors have access to at your university

1. Individual career counseling
2. Career exploration groups
3. Special workshops or outreach programs
4. Career Information Center
5. Career Planning and Placement
6. Computerized Career Exploration Opportunities

D. Generating discussion of advisor's questions and role - Ask...

1. How can we assist you as advisors in this process?
2. What are your primary concerns in advising students with career related questions?

E. Evaluation

SOME SUGGESTED DEFINITIONS OF THE ADVISOR'S ROLE

I. Most Often Suggested:

(1) Information giver

(2) Advice giver

(3) Provider of emotional support and reassurance

II. Others:

Confidant

Someone to talk; to listen

Guide

Parental substitute

Reassurance giver

Reality tester

Validator

Sounding board

Policy interpreter

Counselor

Analyst

Appendix D

EXPLORING YOUR NEEDS AS AN ADVISOR

Discuss with the group your reasons for wanting to be an advisor. Consider the following questions:

1. What needs do you have as an individual that you feel can be met by helping others?
2. What are your limits as a helper/advisor?
3. What kinds of problems do you feel you can be helpful with?
4. When do you know you need help in dealing with a student's problem?
5. What kind of problems do you feel you can't be helpful with? Where do you draw the line when you aren't being helpful?
6. What are your personal feelings about asking someone for help with a personal concern, such as a minister, physician, psychologist or psychiatrist?

Appendix E

OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR ADVISORS

Annual Luncheon Seminar

Personality Testing

Interest Testing

Interviewing Skills

Using Career Information Resources

Computer Assisted Career Exploration

Producing Audio-Visual Presentations of Academic Programs

Managing Stress

Choosing a Major

Career Interest Testing Groups

Career Advising for Liberal Arts Students

Appendix F

TOPICS SELECTED BY ADVISOR FOR DISCUSSION OR PRESENTATION
AT FUTURE ADVISOR'S SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Advisor's Role in student retention

The University Placement Service

The University Cooperative Education Service

Sharing between advisors of things that work for them in advising

Helpful hints for new advisors

Coping with burnout

Learning about new academic or career options in other departments

Presentation on the Counseling Services' programs to include a description of what actually happens when a student comes in for counseling

What are students saying to counselors about their experiences with advisors

Information on other campus resources that advisors should be aware of

Opportunity to clear up misconceptions about other departments' programs, e.g., GPA requirements for entry

Training sessions on developing counseling skills

Presentations by each college on their advising problems

The legal aspects and implications of advising

Dealing effectively with parents

Review of computerized information available from registrar for advising purposes

The establishment of an information exchange system for advisors using newsletter or computer file